

Friday, May 28, 2004

Immunization staff receive CDC award for improvement in coverage



Photo by Dan Axler

The staff of the Indiana State Department of Health Immunization Program, hold the award they received in May from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for Indiana's being the state with the second greatest improvement in vaccination coverage of two-year-olds since 1999. Pictured are: Steve Sellers, Charlene Graves, M.D., Michael Runau, and Beverly Sheets. Not pictured is Terry Adams. Sheets and Adams are contractors who oversee the Vaccines for Children Program, which is managed by the Delaware County Health Department. Dr. Graves, the medical director for Immunization, said, "Our ISDH Immunization Program, the Vaccines for Children Program, and the Indiana Immunization Coalition have all worked hard and as a team to improve the immunization rates of Indiana's children. While we are pleased with this recognition of our progress, we realize that we still have a long way to go to reach the desired 90 percent coverage levels for two-year-olds."

Illegal giant African land snails found in Indiana; ban in place



PHOTO BY RICH FIELDS, DNR

Wabash County Health Department employee Jennifer Swango displays giant African land snails recently confiscated in her county.

On May 7, the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (DNR) issued a quarantine banning giant African land snails from Indiana.

According to the Department of Natural Resources, the quarantine stems from recent findings in Wabash County, where the snails were to be available at a local flea market.

Wabash County Health Department Environmental Health Specialist Jennifer Swango, who first came across the snails, said she was contacted by a concerned citizen who had read a classified ad for the snails.

After contacting the Indiana Department of Agriculture, Swango then confiscated all 70-80 snails.

"I had no problems collecting them," Swango said. "Most people didn't realize that they are dangerous."

The quarantine, in part, says that no

person in Indiana may "possess, offer for sale, sell, give away, barter, exchange or otherwise distribute or release a giant land snail, in any life stage in Indiana."

Mike Sinsko, State Department of Health medical entomologist, said individuals can become ill if they ingest snails that have not been completely cooked.

"Giant African land snails can carry the rat lung worm, which can cause individuals who eat raw or undercooked snails to develop meningitis and to suffer from permanent neurological damage," said Sinsko, adding that while the rat lung worm has not been reported from Indiana, snails which are brought here directly from the tropics might harbor the parasite.

State entomologist Robert Waltz said the giant African land snail is considered to be the most threatening to the

Expectant parents 'showered' with baby essentials

On Saturday, May 22, expectant parents in six Indiana cities were showered with everything they need to know about preparing for, and having, a baby.

The Office of Minority Health at the State Department of Health sponsored its third annual "Shower Your Baby with Love, Baby Showers," with assistance from local sponsors.

The showers offered tips to low-income families on everything from eating habits to car seat safety, and were held in Elkhart, Evansville, Gary, Indianapolis, Lafayette, and South Bend. There were baby showers offered in both English and Spanish in Lafayette and South Bend.

"We are hosting these showers to help expectant parents ensure the good health and proper development of their children before and after birth," said Tasha Smith-Bonds, children's program coordinator for the Office of Minority Health. "Proper prenatal care is vital in preventing infant mortality and low-birth-weight babies."

During the day-long shower, expectant parents were given gifts of diapers, sleepers, baby wipes, and children's books. A car seat, crib and breast pump were also raffled off.



Photo by Dan A xler

State Department of Health employees helped wrap 130 baby shower gifts for the local "Shower Your Baby with Love, Baby Shower." Tasha Smith-Bonds, Minority Health, shown here, organized the event and "wrapping" party.

"Due to the generous help of our corporate sponsors, the 'Shower Your Baby With Love, Baby Showers' have provided 3,000 expectant parents with free health education and screenings, activities, and demonstrations as well as gifts of cribs, car seats and clothing since the program's inception in 2002," said Smith-Bonds.

Expectant parents were also offered information on the Read and Rise initiative which provides information and tools necessary for families to help children gain early literacy, on enrollment in the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) supplemental nutrition program, and on the many resources available to them.

'Grandmothers teas' stress importance of breastfeeding

In an effort to promote breastfeeding, the State Department of Health's Office of Minority Health hosted "Grandmothers Teas" the weekend of May 15.

"We recognize the important role that grandmothers play in influencing family health behaviors," said Tasha Smith-Bonds, children's coordinator with the Office of Minority Health.

"The main goal of these teas is to provide grandmothers with information on the health benefits of breastfeeding so that they can help build a foundation of support for new breastfeeding mothers," she said.

Nearly 40 grandmothers attended teas in Indianapolis, Lafayette and South Bend.

Besides breastfeeding, grandmothers were also educated on other baby-related topics like safe sleeping habits and second-hand smoke.



Free osteoporosis and blood pressure screenings were also provided, as well as information on breast and cervical cancer.

"By attending these teas, grandmothers are helping to close the health gap of infant mortality and low-birth-weight babies in the African-American community," said Smith-

Bonds.

State health officials say that breastfeeding is proven to be one of the best ways to ensure a healthy start in life for infants. Babies who are breastfed enjoy greater protection from illnesses

and allergies, including ear infections, asthma, and other infections. Studies have also shown that breastfeeding reduces the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

The Express
a biweekly publication

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Agency reaches out to Hispanic women at local festival

The State Department of Health was able to educate hundreds of women of Hispanic ethnicity about breast and cervical cancer through a local celebration.

The agency's **Breast and Cervical Cancer Program (BCCP)** participated in Cinco de Mayo, May 2 at the Indiana State Fairgrounds. The festival celebrates the 1862 Battle of Puebla, in which Mexicans defeated French invaders.

According to Nicole Boone-Poole, BCCP, data shows that a large portion of Hispanic women enrolled in the agency's program are women who have been rarely or never screened for cervical cancer. Rarely is defined as not having a pap test in five years or more.

"Furthermore," she said, "women who are rarely or never screened have a higher rate of cervical abnormalities."

Language barriers and cultural differences are reasons the Hispanic community is hard to reach, said Irma Tragesser, BCCP.

Keeping that in mind, the State Department of Health had bilingual staff

and volunteers on hand at Cinco de Mayo, as well as Spanish versions of all handouts. An interactive educational game was used to provide Spanish-speaking women with facts on breast and cervical cancer.

"This was a good opportunity to educate the Hispanic population," said Tragesser,

explaining that 10 women were pre-enrolled in BCCP.

Additionally, Tragesser said representatives from the agency were able to network with various Hispanic organizations to promote health education among the Hispanic community.

Next up: Fiesta Indianapolis this fall.



Photo by Dan Axler

Irma Tragesser, left, and Carol Case, right, represented the agency's Breast and Cervical Cancer Program at the Cinco de Mayo celebration May 2.

Chronic disease management program offered

The State Department of Health is sponsoring a six-week chronic disease self-management program, "Living a Healthy Life with Chronic Conditions."

Open to all state employees, but limited to 25 participants, the free program will begin June 15. All sessions are at the Indiana Government Center South, and are from 9:00 to 11:30 a.m. Participants who attend all six sessions will receive a free pedometer.

✓ Session one – June 15
Conference Center, IGCS, Room 2

✓ Session two – June 22
Training Center, IGCS, Room 4

✓ Session three – June 29
Training Center, IGCS, Room 4

✓ Session four – July 6
Training Center, IGCS, Room 2

✓ Session five – July 13
Training Center, IGCS, Room 4

✓ Session six – July 20
Training Center, IGCS, Room 4

To register or for more information, contact Pam McVey
at pmcvey@isdh.state.in.us or 233-7634.

Relays raising funds, awareness of cancer

Various State Department of Health employees are participating in the American Cancer Society "Relay For Life" next month.

A nationwide event, the American Cancer Society Relay For Life raises money to help the fight against cancer through funding research, providing services to cancer patients and their families, offering cancer education, and supporting advocacy efforts.

According to Irma Tragesser, **Breast and Cervical Cancer Program (BCCP)**, there are several relays planned locally at various locations.

She said the walking relays are between 12-24 hours in length, are overnight, and involve teams that collect donations individually. Each team is asked to have a representative on the track at all times.

An evening luminaria event honors those that have had, or are fighting, cancer.

"Relay offers the community a wonderful opportunity to participate in the fight against cancer," Tragesser said.

Martha Bonds, Minority Health, is representing the State Department of Health as the survivor tent chairperson for the Relay For Life of Center Township at the IUPUI Track and Field.

As a cancer survivor, she said it means a lot to her to participate.

"It's an honor anytime you can help raise money to find a cure for all

cancers," she said. "It's a wonderful thing and I'm very excited to be a part of it."

Nicole Boone-Poole, BCCP, is forming a team and participating in the Relay For Life at Pike High School on June 11-12, as is Tragesser.

"Because this event focuses on all cancers, I encourage everyone to show their support and consider getting involved in one way or another," Boone-Poole said. "Almost everyone knows somebody that has been diagnosed with some type of cancer. They can either form a team, join a team, or make a donation."

And, according to Tragesser, you don't have to be part of a Relay For Life team to show your support.

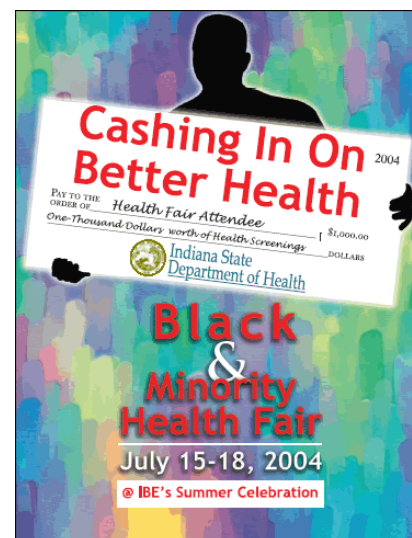
"I invite everyone to stop by a relay location, celebrate survivorship and support the fight against cancer," she said.

Anyone wanting to join Bond's survivor team for the June 11-12 Relay at the IUPUI Track and Field Stadium can contact her at mbonds@isdh.state.in.us.

To join Tragesser's or Boone-Poole's team at the June 11-12 Relay at Pike High School, contact them at itragess@isdh.state.in.us or [npool@isdh.state.in.us](mailto:npoole@isdh.state.in.us).

To form your own team, or for more information about American Cancer Society events, call 317-347-6670 or visit the agency's official Web site at www.cancer.org.

Volunteers Needed!



Volunteers are needed for the Black & Minority Health Fair. The Health Fair will be held during the Indiana Black Expo's Summer Celebration, July 15 - 19, 2004.

Volunteers are needed to work in shifts of three to four hours in registration, stage, traffic control, and volunteer check-in. Nurses are needed to volunteer for counseling and referral in the health screening area. The Volunteer Committee is also seeking crowd motivators for Friday, Saturday, and Sunday.

Individuals interested in volunteering can call the Fair Volunteer Committee at (317) 233-7685, or visit the State Department of Health Web site at www.statehealth.in.gov and click on the link to the Black & Minority Health Fair.

SNAILS: DNR warns of importance of proper disposal

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environment of any land snail in the world.

"The giant African land snail is known to eat at least 500 different types of plants including some grown as crops in Indiana," Waltz said. "The plants the snail eats includes most varieties of beans, peas, cucumbers, and melons."

Swango explained that this particular snail has a spiral straight back and a very distinctive shell.

"They are not aquatic and therefore don't live in the water," she said. "People should not be alarmed if they find snails in the water. Those are not this particular type of snail."



Photo by Rich Fields, DNR

Giant African land snail.

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is also advising teachers who use

the snails in their classrooms to not dispose of them, or let them loose in the environment when the school year ends. Instead, they are asked to contact the Department of Natural Resources or the United States Department of Agriculture for proper disposal.

Anyone in possession of a giant African land snail should call the DNR, toll free, at 1-877-463-6367 or the USDA's Gary Simon, state plant health director, in Lafayette at 765-446-0267.

The snails should never be thrown out, released into the wild, or flushed, according to the Department of Natural Resources.